

# NATIVE COUNSELLING SERVICES OF ALBERTA

## NATIVE LIAISON OFFICER PROGRAM

In Alberta, as in most other provinces and territories, Native offenders are over-represented in correctional institutions. Approximately 2% of the Canadian population is Native (Stats Canada: 1981), yet Native people make up 9% of the Federal prison population and average 15% of the provincial inmate populations. (Stats Canada: 1984)

In Alberta, Native people make up about 4% of the population, yet make up 20% of the federal prison population and 25% of the provincial correctional population.

Many Native inmates have special needs that Alberta's correctional institutions would have difficulty handling, if it were not for the services of the Native Liaison Officers, or Native Program Coordinators as they are called in the Federal institutions.

Native Liaison Officers provide services which include:

- helping inmates communicate with correctional staff;
- explaining institution regulations to inmates;
- assisting inmates with parole plans and hearings;
- escorting inmates on temporary absences;
- counselling inmates with personal, family and other problems;
- referring inmates to support programs such as NCSA's halfway house, parole and probation programs, and forestry camps;
- assisting inmates to stay in contact with their families, communities, and helping agencies;

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- assisting inmates to develop return plans;
- providing Native cultural information to correctional staff; and
- sharing information on offenders with NCSA staff at other provincial and federal institutions.

A special part of the Native Liaison Officers' job is to assist the Native Brother and Sisterhoods. Through these organizations, Native Liaison Officers assist in setting up short and long term programs such as:

- Elders programs
- Life skills programs
- Native awareness workshops
- Cree classes
- Native craft classes
- Sweats and Sacred ceremonies
- Legal Education classes
- Drug and alcohol abuse programs
- public speaking sessions
- socials
- sporting events.

NCSA's Native Liaison Officer Program was started in 1972 when contracts were drawn up with Canadian Penitentiary Services and Alberta Correctional Services.

In 1983-84, NCSA had 11 Native Liaison Officers and Native Program Coordinators located in eight (8) institutions:

Bowden Institution	1
Calgary Correctional Centre	1
Drumheller Institution	2
Edmonton Maximum Institution	1
Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Inst.	2
Lethbridge Correctional Centre	1
Peace River Correctional Centre	2
St. Paul Correctional Centre	1

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Native Liaison Officers also provide parttime services in NCSA's Westcastle Minimum Security Forestry Camp, NCSA's Beaver Lake Forestry Camp, and the Bow River Correctional Centre in Calgary. In addition, NCSA courtworker staff provide combined liaison and courtworker services in the Edmonton and Calgary Remand Centres.

In 1983-84, program staff had a total of 11,405 client and agency contacts. Of these, 60% were with male inmates, 35% with agencies and 4% with female inmates (see table 1). Agencies contacts included Social Services, Treatment Centres and Employment Agencies. The majority of these contacts were made in provincial institutions.

TABLE 1: Number of Client and Agency Contacts at Federal and Provincial Institutions, 1983-84:

Type of Client	Type of Institution		Total	Percent
	Federal	Provincial		
Male Inmate	2,674	4,184	6,858	60.1
Female Inmate	17	448	465	4.1
Family	51	50	101	0.9
Agency	1,490	2,491	3,981	34.9
	4,232	7,173	11,405	100.0%

SOURCE: NCSA Liaison Statistics forms. Reprinted from NCSA's 1983-84 Annual Report.

The Native Liaison Officer Program can be summed up as being "a link" - a link between Native offenders and correctional staff, between Native offenders and the "outside", and between Native culture and non-Native culture.

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The Beaver Lake Forestry Camp at Lac La Biche was developed by NCSA and began operations in 1979. It is designed to accommodate a maximum of 20 inmates from the St. Paul Correctional Institution. During 1983-84, 117 inmates took part in the program offered at Beaver Lake. The majority of inmates stayed at the camp between one and six months, during which time, they worked on several projects; including maintenance at the Junior Forest Warden Camp at Long Lake, Community Service work and constructing group camp sites at Shaw Lake.

The Westcastle Forestry Camp originated with the Alberta Department of Corrections and was transferred to NCSA in 1980. During 1983-84 the facilities expanded to accommodate 28 inmates from the previous maximum of 16 inmates. In total, 104 inmates participated in the program during the year. Together with the Alberta Forestry Services they maintained camp grounds by cutting down pine beetle-infested trees, repairing fences and cutting firewood.

In both camps, inmates normally work a five day week and are paid a daily incentive wage. After their work is completed, inmates may choose to take part in a variety of leisure activities, including entering local tournaments for team sports such as slow-pitch baseball, hockey and volleyball.

The camps also belong to Alcoholics Anonymous groups in neighbouring communities and inmates may qualify for Temporary Absence passes which will allow them to attend the meetings. The majority of inmates appreciate the opportunity to serve their sentences in the camp as an alternative to an institutional setting.

The cooperation and support received from the two parent institutions, St. Paul and Lethbridge Correctional Centres has greatly contributed to the success of these programs.





Native Counselling Services of Alberta's Beaver Lake  
and Westcastle Minimum Security Forestry Camps

NCSA operates two minimum security camps in the northern and southern regions of the province. They operate in conjunction with the Provincial Solicitor General's Department and Native Counselling Services of Alberta. These camps provide inmates with work and leisure programs different from those available in other Provincial Correctional Centres, and are specifically oriented to the needs and concerns of Native inmates.

Inmates who come to Beaver Lake and Westcastle Camps generally work on forestry and community projects. The primary objectives of the camps are to aid in the reduction of recidivism by:

- 1) providing an alternate work and leisure program to that offered by most institutions;
- 2) teaching life and work skills;
- 3) involving the inmate in the community;
- 4) providing counselling by NCSA staff and other agencies; and
- 5) providing work experience that will aid the inmate in finding permanent employment upon his release.

Inmates eligible to transfer to the camps include those that:

- have served one third of their sentence
- have a record of non-violence
- are from the areas where the camps are located
- are primarily Native

Prior to an inmate being admitted they are also carefully screened by a classification committee.

Unlike other minimum security camps, Westcastle and Beaver Lake are staffed by Native Camp Officers and not Correctional Officers. The daily operation of the camps are governed by the Standard Operating Procedures put out by the Alberta Corrections Department in conjunction with NCSA.

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NCSANative Counselling Services of  
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Native Liaison Officer Program

Borrower's Name

Date Due

K. Giltner  
\* \* Karyn Mytrash  
See Reg. card

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